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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 05, 2009

Summary: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's announcement to "set up an independent commission to investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto" along with his urging Pakistan and India to "resume the composite dialogue to de-escalate the tension in the region" dominated front pages in all newspapers on Thursday. All newspapers reported that "nine militants were killed in a police encounter near Peshawar," and that "Taliban free 30 kidnapped Frontier Constabulary personnel in Swat after they promised to quit their jobs." Newspapers highlighted reports that the "militants torched 10 NATO supply trucks in Khyber Agency." Several major dailies ran a WP report that the "Obama administration will seek early Congressional action on legislation authorizing three-fold expansion in economic assistance to Pakistan."

Newspapers ran in-depth editorials highlighting different facets of the outstanding dispute over Kashmir as Pakistan observes it's Solidarity Day, a medium for expressing unity with the people of Kashmir. However, some major English language dailies preferred to editorialize current affairs. The second largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," observed that "President Obama is serious in playing a role for the dispute resolution in keeping with his announcement." Likewise, the pro-Taliban daily, "Islam," noted that "it seems that now the big powers are taking interest in Kashmir issue following gradual changes in the international scenario, particularly the election of Barack Obama as the new U.S. President." The Lahore-based populist daily, "Khabrain" wrote: "The most significant development in this respect is President Obama's stance on this issue so far." End Summary.

News Stories

"UN Announces Probe Into Benazir Murder - Chilean Ambassador To Head Commission" "Dawn" (02/05)

"United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced in Islamabad on Wednesday that an independent commission of inquiry would be set up soon to investigate the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.... Sources in New York told 'Dawn' that the Ambassador of Chile to the UN, Mr. Hernando Munoz, would lead the three-member UN inquiry commission."

"UN Chief For Pakistan, India Talks Resumption" "The News" (02/05)

"United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday urged Islamabad to fully investigate and cooperate with India on the Mumbai attacks and said the two countries should continue the

composite dialogue to deescalate tension in the region."

"Investigators See Bangladesh Link In Mumbai Terror Attacks" "Dawn" (02/05)

"Pakistani investigators probing into the Mumbai attacks are closing in on a Bangladeshi connection to the terrorist strike and are said to have evidence of not only the involvement of a banned militant organisation, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami, Bangladesh (HuJI-B), but also of its role in planning the attack and training the terrorists."

"Pakistan Asked To Lift Ban Against Islamist Outfits" "The Nation" (02/05)

"Around a dozen Kashmiri militant groups gathered publicly on Wednesday to urge Government of Pakistan to lift the ban against Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jamaat-ud-Daawa (JuD) because no Kashmiri Jihadi organization was involved in the Mumbai attacks, Syed Salahuddin, head of the Hizbul Mujahideen, told the gathering in Muzaffarabad."

"Nine Militants Killed Near Peshawar" "The News" (02/05)

"Nine members of a Bara-based militant group were killed in an encounter with the police and the Qaumi Lashkar comprising armed villagers when they allegedly attempted to kidnap the Nazim of Bazidkhel Union Council near Peshawar on Wednesday morning."

"Foreigners Also Fighting In Swat: ISPR" "Daily Times" (02/05)

"ISPR spokesman Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas has said that foreign militants are also present in Swat - where security forces are pursuing a new strategy to rein in the Taliban. Abbas told a private TV channel, 'No immediate results can be expected from the military operation in Swat ... it will take time.'"

"30 Security Men Freed After 'Promising To Quit Force'" "Dawn" (02/05)

"The Taliban in Swat set free 30 police and paramilitary personnel in the presence of journalists in Kotli Dadhara area of Kabal tehsil on Wednesday, after securing written promise from them that they would quit their government jobs and never fight against the Taliban, local Taliban leaders told newsmen after a meeting of the Taliban Shoora."

"10 NATO Supply Trucks Torched" "Dawn" (02/05)

"Ten trucks of a convoy returning from Afghanistan after delivering NATO supplies were torched on the Peshawar-Torkham highway in Khyber Agency."

"Another Bridge Damaged In Khyber" "The News" (02/05)

"Another bridge in Khyber Agency suffered partial damage when an explosive device, placed underneath it, went off late on Wednesday night. The incident could further delay resumption of supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan."

"Media Persons Detained, Tortured In Khyber Agency" "The News" (02/05)

"Members of the Khasadar force on Wednesday detained and allegedly tortured reporters of two private television channels when they were on their way to Ali Masjid area in Khyber Agency to get footage of the ancient bridge blown up by militants a day earlier."

"Pakistan's Leverage Over U.S. In Doldrums" "The News" (02/05)

"Bagram Air Base's lifeline enters Pakistan at the Port of Karachi and passes through the historical Khyber Pass into Afghanistan. Bagram, the huge military airport plus housing compound, is the headquarters of Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan's (OEF-A). It is maintained by the 5th and the 6th Aviation Battalions of the United States Army and the United States Air Force's 455th Air Expeditionary Wing is also housed at Bagram.... The lifeline to Bagram is Pakistan's leverage over the U.S.... America is thinning

out Pakistan's leverage, diluting it to put America in a position to force Pakistan to 'do more.'"

"Kayani To Visit U.S. By Month-End" "The News" (02/05)

"Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani will embark on his maiden official visit to the United States towards the end of the current month, 'The News' learned on Wednesday. 'Keeping in view the geo-political situation in the region, this visit of the Army Chief has significant importance for Pakistan,' an official source said, wishing anonymity."

"U.S. Administration Moves For Approval Of Aid Increase Bill" "Dawn" (02/05)

"The Obama Administration is seeking early congressional action on a proposal for a three-fold increase in U.S. economic assistance to Pakistan, diplomatic sources told 'Dawn.'... The move is part of the Obama administration's new strategy which treats Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single theatre of war but also seeks to deepen and expand its relationship with Pakistan."

"USAID Trains 24 District Health Managers In Leadership Skills" "The Nation," "Daily Times," "The Post," "The Statesman" (02/05)

"Twenty-four health and population managers from Balochistan and NWFP graduated from the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) leadership workshop for providing client-centered services."

"Business Ambassador Program To U.S. From April-21-24" "Business Recorder" (02/05)

"The United States Embassy, in collaboration with the Board of Investment (BOI), has chalked out 'Business Ambassador Program to the United States' to stimulate investment climate in Pakistan, and to encourage more trade between Pakistan and the United States."

"Britain Pushes For NATO Role In Pakistan" "The News" (02/05)

"Britain's Defense Secretary John Hutton on Wednesday urged his NATO allies to take a more active role in helping Pakistan fight extremist groups along its border with Afghanistan, he told reporters after talks with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and the alliance's 26 national envoys in Brussels."

"India Warns Obama Over Intervening In Kashmir" "The News" (02/05)

"New Delhi has warned US President Barack Obama that he is 'barking up the wrong tree' if he tries to broker a deal between Pakistan and India over the disputed territory of Kashmir. M.K. Narayanan, India's National Security Adviser, said the new U.S. President was in danger of dredging up outdated Clinton-era strategies in an effort to improve ties between the nuclear armed neighbors, Narayanan said in an interview with the CNBC TV18."

"Nation Renews Today Solidarity With People of Kashmir" "Dawn" (02/05)

"The Kashmir Solidarity Day will be observed across Pakistan and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday to renew solidarity with the people of Kashmir. The program for the day includes public rallies, seminars, TV shows, human chains and many other events."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Kashmir Solidarity Day: Positive Approach Of World Leadership And Our Responsibility," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/05)

"The Kashmir solidarity day is observed at a time when there seems to be a ray of hope for the Kashmir dispute resolution due to special attention being paid America, Britain and other countries.... President Barack Obama is serious in playing a role for the dispute resolution in keeping with his announcement and his

special representative Richard Holbrooke is about to visit Pakistan and India. Holbrooke will definitely have mandate from President Obama to discuss any possible resolution of the dispute with the concerned parties."

"Kashmir Day: Reiteration Of Resolve," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/05)

"It seems that now the big powers are taking interest in the outstanding issue of Kashmir following gradual changes in the international scenario, and particularly the election of Barack Obama as the new President of United States. Although President Obama announced to take up the Kashmir issue on his agenda for South Asia, the situation is not very clear as there are some conflicting reports that the Obama Administration has assigned Richard Holbrooke to resolve the Kashmir dispute, but later on some reports revealed that the Indian lobby in Washington has done away with Kashmir issue from the Obama Administration's schema. Now what is the truth? We will have to hang around until Mr. Richard Holbrooke visits Pakistan."

"February 5: Not A Day For Kashmiris Only," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (02/05)

"It is the Kashmiris' fervor that has kept this issue alive, compelling even those countries to think about it that used to say yes to whatever India had to say. Recently, the British Foreign Minister openly said that the region can be cleansed of terrorism if the Kashmir issue is resolved. The most significant development in this respect is President's Obama's stance on the issue so far. In fact some days ago, Admiral Mullen went to the extent of saying that finding a resolution to the Kashmir issue is very important in order to eliminate terrorism."

"Kashmir: Expectations of a Solution," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (02/05)

"Indian diplomats and politicians have moved vigorously to keep the U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke away from Kashmir issue, because they knew that he is a hard nut to crack. Likewise, it also seems that President Obama is discarding his earlier stance on Kashmir issue as both the U.S. and Britain share interests in India more than even in Pakistan. Coincidentally today, as Pakistani nation is observing the Kashmir Solidarity Day, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon is in Islamabad and as such we must remind him of his responsibilities on Kashmir, and jog his memory with the old-forgotten resolutions on Kashmir issue."

"Kashmir Committee Rides Again," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/05)

"Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who will presumably sign the memorandum that has to go to President Barack Obama on fulfilling his pledges to Kashmir, might possibly undermine it by his statements that Pakistani troops should be withdrawn from the Tribal areas and that ISAF-NATO forces should leave Afghanistan. How can one ask two contradictory things of Mr. Obama, who looks at the NATO presence in Afghanistan as a crucial aspect of his policy in our region? The Kashmir Committee has never worked on any basis of realism. As for the international 'diplomacy' the Committee keeps on self-consciously recommending, it has remained a facilitator of junkets."

"Kashmir Solidarity Day And Need For Resolution Of Longstanding Disputes," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (02/05)

"Not ensuring the implementation of its resolutions has damaged UN's credibility as an organization working for the entire international community. Questions are also being raised about the UN for its haste in protecting the interests of powers like the U.S. and Britain, while neglecting issues like Palestine and Kashmir. The UN must fulfill its responsibility as a global organization so that there is durable peace in the world."

"Kashmir Solidarity Day," an editorial in the Lahore-based

independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (02/05)

"India is not willing to give up its occupation of Kashmir, and gets annoyed with any country that offers help to resolve it. Today, we must play an effective role for Kashmir's independence, not only at the public level, but also at the state level."

"A Skewed Approach," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/05)

"Unless sanity prevails in Washington, an increased reliance on force alone will lead to devastating consequences in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are required to bear the brunt of the War on Terror.

It is the moral responsibility of the U.S. to build Afghanistan which they have destroyed twice.... The best way for Washington is to provide the Pakistan Army the high-tech weaponry it badly needs, and let it deal with the terrorists. Further, it has to fulfill promises regarding the development of the tribal areas, including the establishment of the ROZs."

"Neo-Cons Encircle Obama Too," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/05)

"A classified pentagon report urges President Obama to shift U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan by de-emphasizing democracy-building and concentrating more on strikes against Taliban and Al Qaeda sanctuaries inside Pakistan. This is despite the fact that in a report the Congress, the Pentagon admitted that violence across Afghanistan was on the rise as there was dramatic increase in insurgent attacks in the spring and summer of 2008.... It is strange that instead of taking these views seriously and reviewing the flawed policy towards terrorism, President Obama is lending ears to trigger happy circles in his administration that also consists of old guards of Bush."

"Advice To Increase Attacks In Pakistan Areas," (an editorial note in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (02/05)

"Pentagon has advised President Barack Obama to speed up attacks against Taliban and Al-Qaeda inside Pakistan.... Due to these attacks the Al-Qaeda and Taliban are gaining support as the majority of those killed are innocent civilians.... The government of Pakistan should run a diplomatic campaign against America in this respect."

"Troubled Roadway," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/05)

"The fact that it has proven impossible to safeguard a relatively short stretch of road shows just how grim our security situation is. The destruction of the bridge also brings into question claims that we are winning the war on militancy. Those behind the successive attacks in the Khyber Agency have yet to be apprehended. This means they are free to carry out more operations in the future.... Pakistan needs a full-fledged plan to take on the militants, a holistic strategy that can enable it to end the state of anarchy it faces today and return order to its roads and highways."

"Mumbai And Dialogue," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/05)

"The Mumbai attacks were clearly a watershed terrorist attack. A new, brazen, sophisticated breed of terrorists now clearly exists in this region and has found a way to match its murderous ideology with the capacity to execute it.... It is in our interest to defeat it and the state must take the lead in the fight. Equally, however, India must be willing to hold out a helping hand. A victim-enemy dichotomy helps nobody."

Patterson